

# Granite Headwaters Watershed Group



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May 22, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Granite Headwaters Watershed Group (Granite Headwaters) has benefitted from two mini-grants through the SWCDMI. Both were dedicated to informing our community about a mercury cleanup project we had adopted, the goal of which is to remove mercury and arsenic from the waters of Flint Creek. Flint Creek has high levels of mercury and, as a result, the strictest fish consumption regulations in the entire state of Montana.

Granite Headwaters' original goal was to adopt a project that would address a local need, as well as create community trust in the watershed group. We believe the successful accomplishment of a community project is a perfect way to achieve an initial level of trust, allowing us to continue building from that point.

Coincidentally, the project that rose to the top is the cleanup of mercury and arsenic from our waters – a mining reclamation project. We might have wished for a simpler project for our first one, but that was not in the cards for us.

Surprisingly, there is a fair amount of unease in the community about our project. Among the fears is that this is an EPA project and the EPA will place responsibility for the cleanup on private landowners. Other misapprehensions are that this will create a huge superfund site, and that mercury in the water is not an actual health threat.

We received two SWCDMI mini-grants. The first grant allowed us to organize our first ever watershed tour. We covered several topics but the primary one was a tour of a mine reclamation, which permitted attendees to see how the work is done. The watershed tour was a great success! People throughout the community talked about it for weeks afterward. The event raised awareness of our group and our goals and helped recruit additional landowners in our project area to support our cleanup effort. We doubled the number of landowners who allowed us access to their land for water, sediment, fish tissue and benthic macroinvertebrate sampling.

The second grant allowed us to create a newsletter which we distributed to nearly 300 Granite County households. This was a four-fold increase in our audience. A secondary benefit to us was an increase in memberships to our organization and an expanded list of people who we can reach out to.

Our second newsletter is nearly ready for distribution. It will inform community members of the progress on our project, including that we are now in communication with the landowner at the project site, and that we have lots of good sampling results.

The most recent stride in progress is that Granite Headwaters (through fiscal agent Granite Conservation District) has secured a \$500,000 grant for the cleanup, with the expectation of doubling that amount!

We would not have been able reach the number of people we have to date without those two mini-grants. They have been invaluable to us in moving our projects forward. We encourage you to continue making those valuable funds available to small, struggling groups like ours, helping them achieve their goals.

The SWCDMI has been excellent to work with and we appreciate them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Karen Petersen". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial 'K' and 'P'.

Karen Petersen  
Granite Headwaters, Administrator